

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2910

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to studying environmental education.

Brief Description: Requiring a study of environmental education.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Talcott, P. Sullivan, Shabro, Santos, Hunt, Anderson and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/25/06, 2/1/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, by October 1, 2007, to conduct an environmental education study to provide findings and recommendations useful in developing the Washington State Comprehensive Environmental Education Plan.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Environmental education teaches about science, conservation, and natural resources with an emphasis on solving the problems of human adaptation to the environment.

In addition to instruction provided in schools, many organizations and agencies offer environmental education programs: nature centers, zoos, aquariums, city and county departments of parks and recreation, non-profit organizations such as the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, and state agencies such as the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources. The Environmental Education Association of Washington (EEAW) is a statewide non-profit organization of educators that offers training, materials, and advocacy for high quality environmental education.

In 2005, the EEAW received a grant from a private foundation to develop a comprehensive environmental education plan for Washington. The EEAW intends that the comprehensive plan incorporate available research on how environmental education promotes career exploration for students, can be used to meet graduation requirements, or assists underserved youth.

Summary of Bill:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must conduct an environmental education study in partnership with public and private entities that promote quality environmental education experiences. The study must provide empirical evidence, exemplary models, and recommendations about career development, service learning, graduation requirements, underserved youth, and professional development for community-based service organizations or state and local agencies. The study provides findings and recommendations useful to the Washington state comprehensive environmental education plan, a public-private endeavor intended to ensure quality outdoor environmental education opportunities for every student, family, and community in Washington.

The OSPI provides an interim update to the Legislature by December 1, 2006, and must complete the study no later than October 1, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: It has been shown that students who participate in environmental education do better on tests. Environmental education promotes curiosity and stimulates interest in ways that spill over into other subjects. This study is a small investment that would leverage private dollars for a worthy effort. A report card prepared by the EEAW showed that the good news is environmental education improves student learning; the bad news is that it is not reaching every student, family, and community. The EEAW has received funding to prepare a master plan. This bill provides support to this effort, incorporates educational research, and engages the SPI in the master plan. Environmental education provides a way for students to learn through hands-on projects: to build a bluebird box, put it in a field, see whether bluebirds come to live in it, and learn about how bluebirds are affected by interaction with people. The study will examine how participation in environmental education programs help students in disadvantaged communities experience nature and build evidence on how this education can benefit communities.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Heath Packard, Audubon Society; Janelle Stokesberry, Tumwater Alternative High School; Wendy Burbidge, Tyler Burbidge, and Hunter Burbidge; Tani Deathridge and Taylor Deathridge; Margaret Tudor, Pacific Education Institute; Bob Dick, American Forest Resource Council; Wendy Franzen; Art Hoover; Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals; Brenda Hood, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Martin LeBlanc, Sierra Club; and Abby Ruskey, Environmental Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.